

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
MINUTES
August 1, 2002

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Frances Werner, John Neal, Rick Holloway, Lee Aitkin, Ralph Ogden, Mary Dahl, Sanford Cohen, Sandee McCullen, David Bertelsen, Steve Saway, Lamar Smith, Chris Newell, Norm Wallen, Lorraine Eiler, William Branan

ABSENT: None

BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Carl Rountree, Don Ellsworth, Deborah Stevens, John Christensen, Shela McFarlin, Mike Taylor, Merv Boyd, Linda Price (representing Roger Taylor), Don Charpio, Mark Pater, Ron Hooper, Bill Gibson, Ann Hutchinson, Steve Gobat, Bill Ruddick, Susan Williams

PRESENTERS & GUESTS: Tammy Pike/Arizona State Land Dept.

Next RAC meeting: October 3, 2002 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Location: NTC, Phoenix.

AGENDA ITEM: Call to Order (Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson)

DISCUSSION: The Chair called the meeting to order at the National Training Center at 9:00 a.m. on the morning of March 1, 2002. Frances thanked everyone for attending. Greetings and introductions were then made around the room.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Review of Previous Meeting's Minutes (Frances Werner, RAC Chair)

DISCUSSION: The February 28-March 1, 2002 RAC meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Update on Legislation, Regulations, and other Statewide Issues (Carl Rountree for Elaine Zielinski)

DISCUSSION: Welcome: Good morning. It's great to see you. Before we start, I'd like to go over a few items that are not on today's agenda.

- **Elaine Zielinski's Arrival:** The new State Director, Elaine Zielinski, is now in Arizona and will officially take the helm on Monday, August 5. Elaine is a 25-year BLM veteran and was the Oregon/Washington State Director for the past eight years. She has worked in Colorado and Washington D.C. for BLM and the Department in various management positions, including planning and environmental coordination, management development, and as a district manager. (Attached is copy of her biographical sketch.)

- **Bud Shaver's Selection:** Lyle D. Shaver, a 21-year law enforcement veteran for the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service, has been named the new Special-Agent-In-Charge for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Arizona and New Mexico State Offices. He reports on Thursday, August 5, and will be stationed out of the Arizona State Office, but will maintain a satellite office in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

As the senior program manager, Shaver will manage investigations, law enforcement and resource protection as they apply to BLM's multiple use management principles. He will be responsible for user education, prevention of resource damage and enforcement of Federal laws and regulations. In addition, Shaver will supervise 35 law enforcement personnel and direct the regional law enforcement and resource protection operations for approximately 24.4 million acres of BLM-administered public lands in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.

- **Humane Borders Interim Strategy:** BLM intends to allow Humane Borders to place a limited number of water stations on public lands in the Tucson and Phoenix Field Offices for a five to six month period, from May through September, the most dangerous time of the year and the period during which most immigrant deaths occur. This is only a temporary measure and is intended to remain in effect through 2003; until a more consistent and effective approach can be developed by federal, state and local land managing agencies working in concert with the U.S. Border Patrol. In permitting these stations, BLM will require substantial liability insurance and daily maintenance of water stations for water quality and quantity. The Yuma Field Office has not received any requests from Humane Borders. This decision is based on the need to stem the rising number of deaths of undocumented immigrants along the Mexican border and the fact that over 400 water stations are already permitted by BLM California, and several more stations have been permitted by the NPS and FWS in Arizona. Funds are also being identified within BLM Arizona's existing funding base to place additional rangers on patrol in areas of high immigrant traffic. In addition, BLM is working with the Border Patrol's search, trauma and rescue (BORSTAR) team. These specially trained agents patrol the deserts and waterways along the border in search of injured or dying border crossers. In addition, BLM is looking to increase its resource monitoring and survey efforts, including overflights, which could result in locating additional UDIs in need of assistance.

BLM is also taking the lead in establishing a multi-agency Task Force to address undocumented immigrant (UDI) issues. The Task Force is made up of Arizona Federal field office managers, U.S Border Patrol, Tribal representatives, and interested representatives from State and County land management agencies. The initial action taken by the Task Force is to convene a workshop to improve coordination among these groups and develop strategies to deal with the impacts caused by smugglers of controlled substances and undocumented immigrants. Efforts are underway to hold the workshop this fall.

BLM is requiring Humane Borders to check the water stations on a daily basis and has also asked them to carry \$10 million in liability insurance.

COMMENTS: Is there any attempt to measure the water temperature? Yes, Humane Borders is monitoring the water temperature and attempting to keep the water shaded. Humane Borders wants this program to work so it is not shut down. Rick Holloway asked about the \$42 million lawsuit brought by a UDI family in California. Carl verified that this is true and the lawsuit is against the FWS.

This past Saturday and Sunday, Carl Rountree went with the rangers to look at the positioning of the water stations. The BLM has worked very closely with other State and Federal agencies to establish some consistency in this issue. The State of Arizona is discussing the idea of water stations. The BLM, while not coming out with any written policy on this issue, supports the use and placement of water stations. Funding has been identified to add additional rangers for additional patrolling of the borders to help identify UDIs in trouble.

- **Update on Fire Condition:** Conditions are much better than they were before the July 4th holiday. In fact, the fire danger at that time was severe enough to close a significant amount of Federal and State lands. However with the start of the monsoon season and increased moisture throughout most of the state, BLM has lifted all of its closures but continues to have fire restrictions in place, except for the Safford and Tucson Fire Zone. Although most of the state has received some moisture (especially in Safford), there continues to be 1-2 fire starts a day from dry lightning. Fortunately the increased humidity has helped BLM contain the fires on initial attack. BLM Arizona staff and resources continue to support all of the wildfire fighting activities in the West. John Christensen added that they still have fire restrictions in Kingman.
- **Dos Pobres/San Juan Phelps Dodge Project/FEIS Production Schedule:** The BLM, USGS and BIA are working on resolving several issues related to the Dos Pobres/San Juan Phelps Dodge Project. A March 15th, 2002 decision by Assistant Secretary Steven Griles outlines a process in which BLM, USGS and BIA will engage in a facilitated effort to: 1) revise and improve the proposed groundwater monitoring and mitigation plan for the Project; 2) conduct Tribal consultation; 3) and complete the NEPA process and Environmental Impact Statement. All parties are currently on schedule to have the monitoring plan revised by the end of August. The revised plan will then be incorporated into the Final EIS. The Final EIS is to be in final camera-ready form by November.
- **Petrified Forest National Park Expansion:** In the 1990's the Petrified Forest National Park developed a General Management Plan (GMP). This plan included a proposed boundary expansion. The proposed expansion was never approved by Congress, but in FY 2001 Congress appropriated two million dollars for acquisition of lands in the proposed expansion area. The BLM received this funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Since the National Park Service (NPS) cannot conduct realty actions outside park boundaries that responsibility fell to BLM.

The BLM has been working toward acquisition of lands within the proposed boundaries. To date, we have received Preliminary Title Opinions (PTO's) on two of the major land holdings and are waiting on two additional (PTO's). Once all PTO's are received, BLM can proceed with ordering appraisals of the major holdings.

Two legislative efforts have recently been introduced, HR 4688 IH and S2494 IS. The bills, both titled Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act of 2001, are virtually identical and propose a broad expansion of the Park's boundaries. Hearings are scheduled for September 2002. We are working with the Park Service to help in park expansion efforts.

- **Big Sandy Energy Project:** BLM is processing right-of-way applications for the Big Sandy Energy Project (project) through completion of an EIS and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The project consists of a 720 MW natural gas-fired power plant, pipeline and associated facilities near Wikieup, Arizona. There is substantial public and political focus on this project. In November 2001 the applicant was denied state permits to build the power plant by the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), largely because of concern over possible harm to endangered species, ground and surface waters, and Native American concerns. The applicant seeks completion of the EIS in order to reapply to the state.
- **Wild Horse and Burro Adoption:** Two very successful wild horse and burro adoptions were held in March and May in Yuma and Tucson. BLM adopted 119 animals (92 horses and 27 burros). BLM received a lot of interest and great local press coverage from the two communities.

AGENDA ITEM: Arizona In-Lieu Selection (Bill Ruddick, BLM Land Exchange Coordinator)

DISCUSSION: Arizona's Enabling Act granted the State four public land sections, however, some sections were not available. The State then gets to choose in-lieu land somewhere else to replace those sections and has decided to select land in St. Johns, Arizona (30,000 acres). The State has 15,000 acres coming in-lieu.

At the same time, a number of acres are being condemned in the East range of Fort Huachuca. A decision should be made in early August to transfer the land in October. There was a problem in the classification process with Federal Register notices not being published in a timely manner. If we don't get a timely publication will direct transfer out. Ten million acres have been transferred and we owe the State of Arizona a small percentage. Between St. Johns, Arizona and Springerville, Arizona, the State has specific interest, as the State of Arizona will own all of the minerals.

The State also has two sections along the Little Colorado River that they want dropped. This area is very rich in cultural resources to the Hopi, Navajo and Zuni Tribes. We have contacted the Tribes and asked for their input and we will be meeting with the Hopi Tribe on August 21, 2002 as cultural issues are of concern. When you transfer land to the State of Arizona, once the land is in State ownership the same protections do not apply as in Federal ownership. One critical issue is the State is not required to consult with the Tribes in what action it is taking, which concerns the Tribes and BLM.

Rick Holloway asked if the BLM could do an MOU with the State. Why couldn't this same criteria apply or wouldn't the State take it with that understanding? The State wants to work closely with both the BLM and Tribes to let us know of the impacts. BLM is working with the Tribes to assure the Hopi Tribe that their values will be protected and conveyed to the State the need to discuss these issues with the Tribes.

The land between St. Johns, Arizona and Springerville, Arizona is very highly speculative for CO2 and it would take some time before any pipeline could be installed. There may be a Federal nexus tied to developing the CO2 and you would have to transport it off of those fields.

Norm Wallen: What is in it for the Tribes and will they go along with it? Nothing.

Lorraine Eiler: Stated that many times the Tribes are leery of what the State is doing and when the State does reveal certain things that even though they are assured that information will not be revealed to the general public that information still is entered on the Internet.

Carl Rountree: We did receive a letter from the Hopi Tribe, stating that they are concerned. The RAC will be kept informed of controversial issues.

The State needs to get out of Fort Huachuca because they have never paid for the use of the lands. Who pays for the land cleanup? The Department of Defense pays for the cleanup and will also take ownership of the land. Most of the East range of Fort Huachuca was Federal and public land in the beginning.

Norm Wallen: What would be done with the Ft. Huachuca land?

Bill Ruddick: Testing is conducted at Ft. Huachuca.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Arizona Drought Strategy (Michael Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources)

DISCUSSION: In the early part of this spring, we recognized that things are bad and we need a policy/strategy to deal with drought situations. BLM came out with guidance for the BLM Field Offices on how to address this situation. We need to be able to work with people on a daily basis and want to make sure that the Field Offices and the people in the field recognize that we need to address the situation and take care of the resources at the same time. The folks in the field are looking at the ground and working with the ranchers to possibly reduce stocking numbers or possibly completely removal of stock from the lands. We have nearly 200 grazing interests in this State. We have asked that BLM people focus on critical riparian areas first. As it stands we have had a small amount of land closures. Most of the work has been received well. The BLM has made a large impact on getting standards and guidance work done this year.

Feeding on State land has accommodated the reduced numbers. The Agua Fria National Monument has reduced pastures. Supplemental feeding on public land is illegal. You don't want to damage the plants when they are coming out of a stressful situation. We can look for some flexibility but it is critical that we take care of business and not damage the ground. The current Guidance Policy expires in September 2003 and the issue will be revisited.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Update on Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan and Final EIS
(Shela McFarlin, Tucson Field Office Manager)

DISCUSSION: Many of you have been involved in this and we hope you continue to be involved. We will bring you up-to-date on the plan before producing a record of decision. The proposed LCRMP and final EIS was issued in June. The comment and protest period ended July 22, 2002 and we received one protest in the plan. In talking with the planning shop in Washington we may receive additional protests. The one protest is sufficient to keep us busy. Washington reviews the protest for timeliness and standing and also looks in terms of the issues. The protest is from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and will have standing and timeliness; however, we are waiting for Washington to review the protest.

Washington often assembles a team of specialist to help with protests. The protest from the CBD is a twelve-page document. When you protest you can only bring up old issues. What is the issue and did we address it?

Issues brought out in the protest were:

- Construction of alternatives was unreasonable. CBD is looking back on leases on State land. BLM should consider having State leases but no grazing on the Las Cienegas.
- Failed in the analyzing of the acquisition strategy. Roads and wilderness areas will be an issue in the planning along with every plan in Arizona in the next three to four years.
- Failed to consider the impacts of global warming.
- Failed to measure impacts of grazing and animal control plans. Stocking limits, residual cow impacts on wildlife and did not evaluate water quality.

We have a lot of work in this protest and suspect that the Ironwood OHV issues will probably be added to the protest. The BLM has to go back through and decide what is the issue and hopefully send a draft response back to Washington this year.

How do you handle the protest period in mitigation? How do you address it? Shela responded that the public will see the Record of Decision. This was an amazing effort and a lot of us here have worked on this issue; Karen Simms has done a wonderful job. Shela would appreciate Karen's advice in other planning efforts. We may have to go to court to defend our decisions. We have a lot of data and some of the protests could be covered.

Washington helps us with thousands of protests and with all of the planning that went into this project only one protest was generated; this speaks well for all who worked on the committee. We appreciate the participation of everyone involved.

Norm Wallen: This is a serious and the RAC, if appropriate, should take a stand on this issue.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Planning Update with RAC Discussion of establishing a Planning Working Group and/or Planning Resource Teams (Steve Gobat, BLM, Lands, Recreation and Planning Group Leader and RAC).

DISCUSSION: The BLM has six planning efforts under way. Two of them are the Sonoran Desert National Monument and the Agua Fria National Monument and they are moving towards the scoping process. The formal scoping phases of Lake Havasu, Grand Canyon Parashant/Arizona Strip and the Ironwood Forest National Monuments have all been completed or are near completion.

OHV access/resource and protection of the lands are all an issue. We have State land inholdings in every planning area. New to planning efforts are the concept of cooperative agency statues. We have been reminded by CEQ that all Federal agencies should invite one another to be involved in the planning process. We sent out over 200 letters and are receiving responses now. We are in the process and have agreed to jointly fund a position with Arizona State Game and Fish. The agreement is ready for Carl Rountree's signature and candidates will be interviewed in two weeks.

The lead agency still remains the lead agency in setting timelines to insure that information is processed in a timely manner. There is an out clause that at any time the cooperating agency can withdraw or be asked to withdraw from the committee. One generic agreement will be written for each land area. We are currently working with the National Training Center (NTC) to develop a training plan to educate cooperating agencies of what is involved when they participate in a planning working group.

For more information on plans go to the website www.az.blm.gov

Lamar Smith: Have State agencies been contacted?

Deborah Stevens: I have copied all of the State agencies, but did not copy the NRDC's.

Lamar Smith: I think the NRDC should be contacted.

Deborah Stevens: I will send a copy to the NRDC lead – Jody Latimer at the AZ State Land Department.

Can the BLM plan for State lands (Example: Ironwood) within that boundary? No per Steve Gobat. Dave said it is still being ignored as far as inventorying the road system. This will not create good feelings. Mike Taylor added that when we did an inventory of areas being included in the Bradshaw/Agua Fria Monument that it was paid for and sanctioned.

Do we need a work group planning committee?

Norm Wallen: I am unclear of the role of the RAC with respect to recommendations for the monuments. What will these regional groups do? At some point will that group and BLM staff report back to the RAC so that the RAC can take a position with respect to each monument?

Carl Rountree: The BLM as Federal land managers would like to use the expertise of the RAC to review and bring comments to the Bureau; however, the State Director will make the final decision.

The Phoenix Field Office worked very hard to get collaboration with the communities. Would the RAC like to serve a more active role and be included when the Bureau starts working with the community groups?

Norm Wallen: This is a good topic for the RAC to discuss and would like the RAC to decide today if they want to make recommendations on the alternatives. RAC members coming to the meetings and interacting with the public would help in educating people of the issues.

There is going to be a national RAC meeting in October 29-30, 2002 at the National Training Center (NTC). With a new State Director arriving now is a good opportunity to obtain ideas on how the RAC will interact with the BLM.

Sanford Cohen: I am uncomfortable with the notion of being presented with scoping results after the fact. The scope of the scoping is something that should be addressed. A lot of the OHV areas may be impacted by people who do not reside in the immediate vicinity but whose input is just as desirable in coming up with a quality finished product. When planning in a certain boundary, OHV users would like BLM to expand the boundaries of those invited to give input.

This body should make recommendations so that the BLM knows the RACs position while in the planning process. The BLM would like RAC members to participate in the areas of their interest. Steve Gobat and Mike Taylor said that detailed briefings could be scheduled for the RAC. Steve Gobat will be the point of contact for any group interested in meeting with the BLM.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period

DISCUSSION: No Comments

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Agua Fria/Bradshaw Foothills Planning Update (Chris Horyza, BLM Planning Team Lead and Planning Contractors)

DISCUSSION: The project is large in scope involving almost one million acres of BLM land. At Lake Pleasant there is an intermixture of private and BLM lands. Among the 1,000,000 acres are 71,000 acres in the Agua Fria National Monument and BLM is hiring contractors and consultants to help with the process. Johnson Stokes was awarded the contract to help with the planning effort. The public participation plan will include a schedule for the scoping process, which will begin at the end of September or early October so tourist visits are uninterrupted.

Currently, the contractor is collecting information on utility corridor needs, visual resource management and recreational opportunity spectrums. The scoping process will close approximately November 1, 2002.

What is the RAC involvement? Last April they met with Frances and several other members of the committee and have tried to discern the RAC involvement in the planning efforts. The RAC may be involved by helping the communities to expand their efforts beyond their parochial interests. We are concerned about coalition groups forming at the community level and how we can work with them in the framework of the advisory committee act. We want to be careful that we do not open ourselves to litigation. In the meantime, citizen groups are beginning to form within the communities. This could be a subject for the RAC working group to discuss.

Mary Dahl: What is the cost of the project?

Chris Horyza: The cost is \$1.7 million delivering two land use plans, EIS and Record of Decision. The contractor has very balanced staff. Northland research is doing cultural resources.

Sanford Cohen: I received an email on July 29, 2002 from another group that I am affiliated with about a meeting in Black Canyon City. People identified as being heavily involved in the community tend to represent a very narrow view of recreation in particular. I applaud the effort in getting the information out to the public, but think it is incumbent on RAC members to be aware of when these meetings take place so they can be involved in public meetings.

Chris Horyza: This is a good example of how community groups operate. I have spoken at 15-30 community organizations. The speaking was an introduction to the BLM planning process. Some people have taken it upon themselves to start their own group (Example: Black Canyon City). It is ok for communities to have a parochial view so we have an idea of their issues. It is exciting to know that the community networks are there. The BLM will be holding community-scoping meetings and if your community wants the BLM to speak this can be arranged. It would be very exciting if members of the RAC would participate in the public meetings so they can help to define these public groups and assist BLM in the planning process. When the BLM starts the scoping process in a month or less we will be mailing planning bulletins out on a regular basis and the RAC will be receiving these bulletins. Chris can also send e-mails to the RAC members notifying them on a monthly basis and send hard copies to those without e-mail.

Mike Taylor: The RAC may want to consider a sanctioned group chosen by the Field Office managers and this group could be involved in working with the public.

ACTION: Chris will send an internal document that is sent within the Bureau to the RAC members informing them of updates and meetings.

AGENDA ITEM: Field Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals (BLM Field Managers)

DISCUSSION: No Discussion

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Reports from BLM Field Managers

Arizona Strip Field Manager Report

Arizona Strip Completes Public Scoping Period for Planning Effort

The public scoping period for management plans for the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and the BLM land on the Arizona Strip between the two monuments ended July 31. More than 2,000 public comments were submitted, and planners are now writing a scoping report. In September they will begin developing alternatives in a public forum. Several agencies have signed or will soon sign agreements giving them cooperating agency status in this planning process, including Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona State Lands Department, and the Mohave County Board of Supervisors.

Pakoon Springs Land Acquisition Complete

The acquisition of the 240-acre Pakoon Springs property on the Arizona Strip was finalized in June. The thermal springs and ponds on this property are ecologically important, and the property holds important cultural resources.

Standards and Guidelines Update

The Arizona Strip Standards and Guides Team have made site visits to eight allotments since January. They have four more to visit before December. There are four Proposed Decisions, three of which have generated protests from Joe Feller and the Center for Biological Diversity. The team is in the process of analyzing the protests before writing final decisions.

Kingman Field Office Manager Report

Navajo Transmission Project

DPA and their contractor, Environmental Planning Group, met with Kingman Field Office KFO staff on April 16, 2002 to discuss this project. DPA said that segment 3 of the project, the preferred alternative, has come to a stand still. This segment is the preferred alternative and passes through the Hualapai Reservation. DPA reported that the Hualapai Nation's demands cannot be met. Kingman Field Office Management and staff have reopened communication between the Hualapai Nation and DPA. DPA has agreed to some of the requests and schedule a meeting with the Hualapai Nation to present and discuss the preferred alternative.

If **DPA** cannot negotiate the preferred alternative with the Hualapai Nation, BLM must meet with DPA and Environmental Planning Group to discuss a feasible alternative.

DPA's second alternative is not Kingman Field Office's recommended alternative. Alternative 2 is not within a designated utility corridor. A newly appointed Project Manager for the Navajo Transmission Project has scheduled a meeting with DPA and EPG to discuss strategies for completing this project.

Lake Havasu Field Manager Report **Resource Management Plan**

Scoping report for our RMP is finished and will be sending to the State Office for their concurrence. Major issues raised by the public were OHV use, no more closures of Public Lands, and land tenure.

Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program

Staff is finishing work on the CAP public access fishing docks, which is part of our on-going Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program. We will be finishing the habitat part of the program this November, we would have placed artificial habitat in 840 acres in Lake Havasu. We are planning a ceremony for all the volunteers in November.

Maintenance of our boat-in-campsites is an on-going process. With increased use on the lake we pick up at least four tons of trash on the weekends, while on the major holidays we pick up seven tons. This year we plan to complete six new restrooms, three are completed and three are in the construction process. This fall we will be rebuilding the launch ramp at Take Off Point, which is located on the south end of the lake, and we will be rebuilding the restrooms and the camping facilities at Empire Landing on the Parker Strip.

Phoenix Field Manager Report **Drought Situation**

The on-going drought has had a major impact on the ranching community within the Phoenix Field Office. All of the 159 allotments managed by PFO have had to reduce the number of livestock to cope with the current conditions. Some have removed livestock entirely. Overall authorized livestock use is at 49% of preference. On March 19, 2002 PFO mailed a cautionary letter to all permittees stating that continued drought conditions may result in livestock reductions and/or total closures.

The range staff has concentrated on allotment inspections to ensure that adverse impacts to the resources due to the drought are held to a minimum. These inspections were, for the most part, conducted on section 3 allotments containing significant amounts of public land and/or critical resources such as T&E habitat or riparian areas. To date 45 drought assessment inspections have been completed. These inspections have resulted in the closure of 5 allotments: one by formal notice (Antelope Creek) and four by request of BLM (Mayer, Congress, Conley and Big Horn).

Safford Field Manager Report

The **Dos Pobres-San Juan Final Environmental Impact Statement** for Phelps Dodge's proposed copper mine north of Safford is scheduled for completion this winter. A disagreement between the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and BLM regarding the water models has been a major delay. A February 2002 decision by Assistant Secretary of the Interior Steven Griles outlines a process in which BIA and BLM will engage in a facilitated effort to (1) revise and improve the proposed groundwater monitoring and

mitigation plan for the project; (2) conduct Tribal consultation; and (3) and complete the NEPA process and Final Environmental Impact Statement. The U.S. Geological Survey was designated as the third-party facilitator. In addition, Griles requested a schedule and timeline showing how this facilitated process will be accomplished; that timeline has been completed. Griles also requested a quick determination from the Solicitor's Office on the groundwater model. Graham County and City of Safford officials are concerned about the completion of the Final EIS for the project, and will be contacting the Arizona delegation and DOI officials during future Washington visits to ensure timely completion.

The new **Aravaipa Canyon Online Reservation System** provides greater customer service to public land users by allowing them to book their own permits online. This gives hikers 24-hour access to the reservation system instead of tying them to BLM's office hours. It also saves users the cost of long-distance phone calls. In the long run, the system will also be a savings to the BLM by saving staff time used to manually process hiking permits. The call-in reservation system is still available for those without internet access. In addition to the reservation system, the entire Aravaipa Canyon website was updated to provide a wealth of information about geology, history, and natural resources in addition to important access and recreation information. Both sites can be visited through the BLM Arizona website at www.az.blm.gov then click on Online Reservations.

The long-awaited **Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area brochure** was published in July (copy in packet). This colorful brochure will be a key component to Graham County's tourism marketing. The large map provided in the brochure is a big step toward providing public information about the area, especially which roads are designated for use; this will help prevent illegal off-highway vehicle entry and protect the area's sensitive riparian ecosystem. The map was printed in two versions: a color glossy paper version that is free and a synthetic, waterproof version designed for those floating that river that will sell for \$3.

The **Graham County Tourism Task Force** is moving forward aggressively to promote the county's many natural and cultural attractions. The BLM public lands are a critical piece of the puzzle and the BLM is actively participating in Gateway Community activities, with Field Manager Bill Civish chairing the Task Force. The Gila Box and Aravaipa Canyon are considered as two of the top destinations in the county. A countywide interagency bird checklist is nearing completion and a publication produced by the local newspaper (copy in packet) is being distributed at area hotels. It has many articles about BLM recreation areas and features Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness on the cover. The Field Office works closely with writers and photographers from *Arizona Highways* to promote BLM recreation and scenic areas. Projects are currently in progress with both *National Geographic* and *Sunset* magazine that will feature Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness and provide international exposure.

Safford Field Office drought assessment and utilization monitoring efforts are continuing. Despite the onset of summer precipitation, the rainfall forecasters for southeastern Arizona are predicting normal to below-normal summer precipitation amounts. Drought-stressed forage requires time to recover therefore light grazing use is preferred ($\pm 20\%$ of the current season's growth) and is acceptable in properly managed pastures. Overall, complete rest for the duration of the current growing season is preferred followed by light use during the fall through early winter. This year's wildfire situation, in combination with the current drought, has severely curtailed the Standards and Guidelines monitoring and evaluation process. Efforts are proceeding to collect scientifically sound Ecological Site Inventory data for the Standards and Guidelines.

This year's record drought, combined with impacts of undocumented immigrants' escaped campfires plus the usual lightning-caused fires, has resulted in a large workload in wildfire suppression. Spring wildfires hit in the Southwest a full two months earlier than usual; most offices were severely understaffed as season hiring was not yet completed. With the monsoons arriving and fire danger lessening, the suppression focus is now shifting to other areas of the country. The Safford-Tucson fire management zone is extremely active in the fire program. Larry Humphrey's Type 1 Team has several BLM team members who are on call for national assignments. They have already been out on several assignments this year including the Rodeo-Chediski, Arizona's largest wildfire in history. The Safford-Tucson Zone's has 75 people who are trained and red-carded in some aspect of fire suppression; of these, about 50 travel to fires and other incidents throughout the nation. The fire program also hires ten on-call Emergency Firefighters (EFF), seasonal engine crews, and a youth crew called the Sapotistas, all of which assist with off-zone assignments. BLM's single-engine air tanker (SEAT) base at the Safford Airport is considered a national model; Safford fire staff conducts training for other states throughout the West. As part of the National Fire Plan outreach, training in basic wildfire fire suppression was conducted with community volunteer fire departments.

Plans are underway to celebrate National Public Lands Day on September 28 with volunteer projects along the Black Hills Back Country Byway and in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. Volunteers will be recruited from local organizations, businesses, youth groups, and scout troops.

Yuma Field Office Manager Report **Summer Recreation**

All of our recreation sites along the Colorado River have seen significantly greater use this summer. Many of the regions recreation areas have been affected by closures due to the extreme fire danger in the southwest. In spite of the heavier than usual crowds coming to enjoy our facilities, the recreation and law enforcement staffs report that there has not been an increase in the number of incidents to accompany the surge in activity. Some improvements are being made to accommodate a greater amount of use and to improve the quality of recreation opportunities. We expect that many who have come to

the area for the first time this summer in search of other outdoor recreation alternatives because of restrictions and closures elsewhere, will continue to visit our sites.

Fire Program

The Lower Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Group has completed ten Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) projects for a total of 60 acres during the past two months. The projects were conducted on Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Lands Management, and Fish and Wildlife Service lands. The Group plans to complete three more projects by the end of the fiscal year, an additional 110 acres. In addition to the fuels projects, the Group has suppressed 60 fires this year to date.

Allegheny Energy

Allegheny Energy Supply Company has withdrawn their exchange proposal as part of a comprehensive cost reduction program. Allegheny's exchange proposal included acquiring 480 acres of public land in Pa Paz County for a well site to support their proposed generating station and offered approximately 2,000 acres in the Sears Point ACEC. Although the exchange will not be completed, it is anticipated that Yuma Field (YFO) Office will receive Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars to acquire non -Federal land within the ACEC in FY2003.

Walter's Camp

Legislation is moving through the House and Senate to revoke a public land order relating to property erroneously included in the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge in California (managed through the Yuma Field Office). The partial revocation is needed to remove Walter's Camp concession from within the Refuge boundary. Although YFO continues to manage the concession at this time, BLM will negotiate a FLPMA lease with the current concessionaire. This site was originally authorized under a Bureau of Reclamation contract that BLM managed until it was discovered that it is within the Refuge. Both BLM and FWS testified before the House committee on Resources, Subcommittee on fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans.

Catellus Exchange

The CA agricultural leases currently managed through the YFO will leave public ownership in the Catellus exchange. BLM CA will acquire Catellus inholdings in wilderness areas and Yuma will acquire Gilmore's Camp and consolidate land ownership near the Colorado River. The Camp is a historical site located on the Colorado River that Yuma has been attempting to acquire for several years. The area has habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher and is along a portion of the river that has not been channelized. It is anticipated that the exchange will be completed in late 2002/early 2003.

Commercial Trespass

Staff specialists and Law Enforcement worked with two local contractors to administratively resolve illegal entry into a vehicle closure area. In return for the illegal entry, the contractor's

hand-raked vehicle tracks within the closure area and agreed to remove approximately 1/2-mile of illegal dumping in the Foothills area east of Yuma.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Questions on BLM Field Manager's Reports (BLM Field Managers or Representatives)

DISCUSSION: Shela McFarlin mentioned an earlier handout from Steve Gobat, which had to do with the planning that there is a note on page three saying in addition to planning activities the TFO is working on the issue of recreational shooting (see handout for correctness).

The Tucson Field Office has interviewed gun stores, gun owners and the Forest Service and want to create dialog on what is allowed and what is not allowed in the monuments and public lands. The BLM wants to come up with some kind of meaningful guidelines in the future. Shela will announce the community meetings.

David Bertelsen: The people who are doing the shooting are shooting across roads; and most of the resource damage is done using automatic weapons. The NRA wants to work with the BLM.

Frances, Mike and Lee Aitkin talked at Ironwood National Monument about Lee becoming involved in the Tucson area. The people shooting guns and destroying resources within the monuments are not the people who will attend meetings.

Lee Aitkin: The gun dealers should be the focal point. The gun dealer who sells the ammunition should have a handout to give customers informing them of acceptable and unacceptable places for shooting guns.

Shela said that we want to consider what can be done with ranger patrols. This is a very complex issue and should be included in the Ironwood National Monument planning. Another issue at the Ironwood National Monument is the ASARCO Mine trespass. ASARCO has a performance bond that is due today. We hope to go on a field trip and look at the ASARCO plan and come to a resolution soon. The good news is we have a working group talking about this issue.

The ASARCO Mine has stopped using the pipeline so we do not need the amount paid of the original bond. ASARCO originally proposed a \$25,000 bond. There currently are no discussions with ASARCO regarding land exchange for the illegal trespass of 432 acres. The BLM will not allow ASARCO to remove the pipeline. There are discussions on boundary adjustments and what it means to have mining claims on the monument. Phase 2-Lee Aitkin joined the ASARCO trespass group one year ago. Both organizations were asked to put their proposals on the table and they were far apart. Though collaborative communication skills they moved these groups together and ASARCO surrendered a lot of their position. ASARCO came up with a litigation and mitigation plan. Lee thinks that at the end of the plan ASARCO will work with BLM and have their bond money returned. It was a clear demonstration of effective dialog on consensus negotiation between ASARCO and the Tucson Field Office staff.

ASARCO and the Tucson Field Office have one more meeting planned.

Rick Holloway: What energy project is going on in Mojave County?

Answer: Allegany Power wanted a plant near Tonopah and Allegheny Power has decided not to go forward with the project.

John Christensen: What are the demands are of the Hualapi and Navajo Tribes? Both tribes brought in their attorneys too soon. They got them together again and asked them to leave their attorneys at home. The new facilitator of these meetings, who is Native American, is very good and talks cohesively with the groups.

Rick Holloway's question regarding Walter's Camp-Merv Boyd is speaking for the Yuma FO. Will they be issued a new lease? Yes, as they don't have a lease at this time. Will it be managed same as it is now? Answer from YFO is no. Once the jurisdiction is decided then the level of service will be decided. We are on shaky ground right now because it is in the refuge. This is not BLM land. It was an estate until it was included in the refuge. The National Wildlife Refuge does not want Walters Camp as part of their refuge because they do not want to be involved with the dealings of Walters Camp.

Shela McFarlin: This body had a conversation regarding the consistency of using the Enterprise Team statewide in land inventories. I would like to see the RAC support the Bureau in making this a consistent process and also to support the Field Managers by using an Enterprise Team.

Don Ellsworth: We all realized that this one team would not be able to do all of these inventories. We agreed that we could use this team as much as we could to accomplish as much as possible.

Data Dictionary-They are starting to use the data dictionary in the Arizona Strip Office. It provides a lot of information for other groups besides BLM. It is being used consistently within the State. Tucson is not using it. Shela said that the Ironwoods Monument is using the University of Arizona instead of the Enterprise Team.

Carl Rountree: Bill Gibson is working with the Enterprise staff and is meeting with them on Friday, August 2, 2002.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from the Standards & Guidelines Working Group (Lamar Smith, Chair)

DISCUSSION: There was a meeting on July 31, 2002 of the subcommittee.

Issues discussed were:

- Ron Hooper met with them and gave them an update of the standards.
- 212 have been completed and out of that 6 allotments were found not to be making significant progress for meeting standards. 3 others have been evaluated, and BLM has received 14 protests so far (9 in the Tucson area). Didn't discuss last night but discussed this morning wondering if the S & G subcommittee might want to review some of the protests.
- Several concerns discussed with regards to implementation of the S & G feedback provided with dissatisfaction with how RRTs are being used.
- There is also some concern with people saying that they don't think the standards fit in certain areas. If they don't fit we need to know.

At this time may need more intensive training of BLM people involved as well as RAC people in putting this together. What do the standards mean? What criteria will be used in this process? Another concern is with time required getting information written and completed. How about a short form evaluation? We

don't need a 30-page document if there is nothing wrong. Concern may be with someone who has a grazing lease that there is an uncertainty with when this report is complete. Another concern is the use of the range health check sheet. Don't know exactly how it is being used but doesn't determine if it meets the S&G's. If procedures are not to be used for decision-making, monitoring and reporting then what is it for? This is an indication to see if more data is needed.

Finally, whether standards, progress or adjustments are being made. People are needed out in the field to do the monitoring. The other issue is whether the RAC can be of assistance in dealing with these protests. We will sit down internally and review this issue. At the end of August, Ken Mahoney will be hosting a workshop on national conservation areas, monuments and applications of standards for rangeland health. Those that are directly involved with the management of these monuments will help to educate and introduce a whole new group. Training or workshops were suggested for the people working on the committee and internal BLM people to talk about the standards and how to apply them.

ACTION: The RAC will write a letter supporting the issue. Lamar suggests coming up with a more streamline procedure and forwarding it to the State Director for approval. There doesn't need to be an action but additional training may be necessary. **VOTED AND APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Public Relations Working Group (Steve Saway, Chair)

DISCUSSION: Mary Dahl helped post notes. The strategy will be to capture highlights from this meeting and add them to Steve and Mary's notes. Deb should have a proposed date and have a notification to check the website or call for the next meeting. If anyone has a special item or announcement that you feel should be in the RAC notes, please give them to Steve Saway.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: RAC discussion on Recreation and Tourism Working Group (Sandee McCullen, Chair)

DISCUSSION: Sandee attended the retirement party for Denise Meridith. It was a nice send off.

Sandee has attended one Ironwood scoping meeting in Arizona City. The Middle Gila Conservation Partnership was formed as a sub-group of this RAC committee to look at user conflicts. Denise Meridith appointed RAC member Ken Baker as the first chair. Evening meetings are being held in the local communities. Bill Gibson is now on the core group and Sandee got invited to the Pinal City Trails Association, which started as non-motorized and has evolved into a multi-use trails planning group with the intent of a 20-year trail plan. There will be two separate partnerships working together.

With the Pinal City Trails Association the RAC is involved with the Middle Gila. Does the RAC want to fall into this new partnership and trails hunting group? Does the RAC want to be kept up-to-date?

David Bertelsen: Stay involved with the Middle Gila.

Frances Werner: If the relationships between the RAC, Middle Gila and all involved could be diagrammed, perhaps a little history and diagram of how these things fit together would be informative in giving the RAC a better understanding. The RAC as a whole cannot be involved in a lot of political activism but can be involved individually.

Tammy Pike (Arizona State Lands Dept.): It is important that the BLM be involved because there is a lot of BLM property in Pinal County.

Frances Werner: Does the County have within their structure County parks?

Tammy Pike: No, they currently do not have Parks and Recreation. Pinal County is working on how to best utilize this group.

Frances Werner: Under State law Parks and Recreation are not a mandate of the County.

Sandee McCullen: Would like to see continuing support from the RAC for the Middle Gila Partnership.

There is an upcoming joint OHV and RAC meeting. Several RAC members tend to be from the OHV side of the RAC. This would be useful to see what problems the RACs are dealing with and how the RAC deals with each problem.

Is Lake Havasu under a different situation regarding water?

Don Ellsworth: Is this regarding the issue as a result of what happened with the watercraft ban with the National Park Service? The Colorado River is a problem from Davis Dam to the Mexican border. The Park Service has tackled this because they could go in and do something. From the Davis Dam to the Mexican border there are multiple agencies involved. The Lake Havasu Field Office will try to do an RFP on the Field Office and address land tenure around the lake and come back and write a recreational management plan in how to deal with issues on the shoreline. This is a collaborative effort with the cities, tribes and counties. With so many agencies involved who makes the designation? Would you tackle it through the state agencies (Arizona Game and Fish)? In the State of California (They have half of the Colorado River) is it the County who enforces the rules?

Rick Holloway: There is going to be a real recreation problem enforcing the rules.

Don Ellsworth: I have gone to the mayor of Lake Havasu City to try and get all the agencies together (17 different entities) and meet on the watercraft/jet ski issue.

Rick Holloway: The Sheriff's Office on Martinez Lake has more control of the waters. We have some issues on the Colorado River that need to be dealt with.

Sandee McCullen: Is this another situation as we have in the middle Gila? Is there an issue between the agencies and the recreation users?

Don Ellsworth: Let this be dealt with on a local issue.

Carl Rountree: The RAC will be involved through the RFP.

Frances Werner: The multi-species habitat plan for the lower Colorado will be coming out for review. Perhaps for the next meeting Sandee could provide information on what recreation groups are doing.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Wild Horse and Burro Working Group (Rick Holloway)

DISCUSSION: This was the largest attendance at a WH&B meeting as there were seven communities involved. We talked about many different topics this morning. Started out with numbers of animals adopted within the past year. We are having trouble with burros on the highway.

Got in middle of discussion about being more proactive as a RAC. Different comments came out from public education to ways to change the law. We are trying to come up with proactive ideas to initiate a public awareness that it isn't the BLM that is trying to take the horses and burros away from the State.

May need to look at the NEPA process. How are we going to get the information out? There was a request made a year ago asking how much this is costing. Currently, we're trying to come up with a

business plan on how to deal with these issues. How do we push the process along and make the public aware?

William Branan: We need to look at the balance of issues. The deer, antelope and ranchers all have a stake in the issues.

Rick Holloway: Trying to get the stakeholders together and come up with a plan.

Lamar Smith: The Arizona Conservation Association could probably be talked into accepting this as a policy statement particularly if we have some facts and figures to back us up. We are also involved in educational efforts and talked about getting a PowerPoint program to educate the rural communities.

David Bertelsen: This is a natural resource issue.

Mike Taylor: What basically happened from the conception of the WH&B strategy is that the dollars we brought into the project were as a result of achieving goals.

Lee Aitkin: What will be an effective management tool from a BLM management point of view?

Neutering would be effective to reduce, control and manage the animals. There should be strategies to be able to employ these tools and elected officials need to be recruited to buy into the business plan and help put these tools in place. What are the most effective tools for herd management?

Mike Taylor: We are working on this at a national level.

Frances Werner: We need to make people aware.

David Bertelsen: We need to know what it costs the BLM to manage this program.

William Branan: The legislature needs to change the law. It isn't the gathering that is the problem it's the maintenance. With elk we issue more licenses and don't round them up.

Carl Rountree: This is a national issue not a State issue. Somehow in developing the strategy we have to remember that it is not Arizona trying to get the H&B reduced, but other states are trying to reduce the counts as well.

Mike Taylor: We agreed to bring to the RAC the compilation on what the BLM has done, where we are, numbers and roadblocks. Need to get with External Affairs and put together a report.

Lee Aitkin: This issue is very political on a national level. We will become no more than a partner.

Mike Taylor: Need to focus on the successes.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Reports from RAC members with discussion and approval of RAC letter on the impacts of illegal immigration.

DISCUSSION: Lee Aitkin moved that we send the letter and second by Dave Bertelsen.

Frances Werner: This is not a good time to send to the delegation.

Rick Holloway: Give support to the upper management of the BLM.

ACTION: VOTED AND APPROVED TO SEND THE RAC LETTER.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Future Meetings/Locations

DISCUSSION: Lee Aitkin moved that the RAC establish a temporary working group to work with BLM to recommend a strategy for RAC input to the BLM planning process; and to present this recommendation for consideration at the next RAC meeting.

Don Ellsworth: Requests the group to make sure that someone is on the group from the West side of the State.

ACTION: Establish a temporary working group to work with the BLM to recommend a strategy for RAC input to the BLM planning process. To be presented at the next RAC meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC discussion on Future Meetings/Locations

Next RAC meeting: October 3, 2002 from 8 a.m. to 12 noon (tentative). Location: NTC, Phoenix. In addition, the working group meetings were scheduled for October 2, 2002 from 1-4 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS

- Update on land and conservation acquisitions. Land exchanges.
- Update on all ongoing planning processes.
- Discuss OHV toolbox strategy. Where do we stand?

Carl Rountree said that the RAC is very helpful to the BLM. He presented appreciation plaques to those leaving the RAC (Ralph Ogden, Dave Bertelsen, Steve Saway, Lamar Smith, and Frances Werner) He thanked them for their support.

Shela McFarlin: On September 14, 2002 at Las Cienegas there will be an annual Empire Ranch Foundation Roundup and Art Show.

MEETING ADJOURNED